DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 327 515 SP 032 833

AUTHOR Parker, Michelle B.
TITLE Adolescent Dancing and the Mentoring of Beginning Teachers.
INSTITUTION National Center for Research on Teacher Education, East Lansing, MI.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE Oct 90
NOTE 24p.
AVAILABLE FROM National Center for Research in Teacher Education, 116 Erickson Hall, College of Education, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824-1034 ($4.60).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Beginning Teacher Induction; *Beginning Teachers; Conflict Resolution; Interpersonal Relationship; *Mentors; Role Models; Secondary Education; Teaching Experience; Time Management; Urban Schools

ABSTRACT

Focusing on eight instances of experienced and beginning teachers' work together in junior and senior high schools in a large urban district, this study explores the work of experienced teachers with beginning teachers, experienced teachers' perceptions of their role, and subsequent enactments. Mentors pass on to beginning teachers, through their teaching and discussions with the beginning teachers, many messages about teaching and learning in an urban context. Yet, as with the existing but often competing and conflicting rules that govern junior high dances and lead to uncertain expectations and outcomes, there are conflicting ideas about what mentoring is supposed to lead to. Most notable in the data are conflicts mentors experience in fitting role expectations with role enactment and the difficulties of criticizing beginners' teaching practices. Two conditions of the work, the limited time available to mentors and the norms governing the work, add to the conflicts. An implication of the study is that mentors could provide a model for beginning teachers by showing how their own struggles to overcome the dilemmas of their practices result in worthwhile experiences in which they study and learn about teaching over time. (JD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

4.6

ED327515

Research Report 90-13

Adolescent Dancing and the Mentoring of Beginning Teachers

Michelle B. Parker

NCRTE

National Center for Research on Teacher Education

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

M. B. Parker

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Sponsored by the United States Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement

SP 032 833

Research Report 90-13

ADOLESCENT DANCING AND THE MENTORING OF BEGINNING TEACHERS

Michelle B. Parker

Published by

The National Center for Research on Teacher Education
116 Erickson Hall
Michigan State University
East Lansing, Michigan 48824-1034

October 1990

This work is sponsored in part by the National Center for Research on Teacher Education, College of Education, Michigan State University. The National Center for Research on Teacher Education is funded primarily by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, United States Department of Education. The opinions expressed in this paper do not necessarily represent the position, policy, or endorsement of the Office or the Department.

National Center for Research on Teacher Education

The National Center for Research on Teacher Education (NCRTE) was founded at Michigan State University in 1985 by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education.

The NCRTE is committed to improving teacher education through research on its purposes, its character and quality, and its role in teacher learning. NCRTE defines teacher education broadly and includes in its portfolio such diverse approaches as preservice, inservice, and induction programs and alternate routes to teaching.

To further its mission, the NCRTE publishes research reports, issue papers, technical series, conference proceedings, and a newsletter on contemporary issues in teacher education. For more information about the NCRTE or to be placed on its mailing list, please write to the Editor, National Center for Research on Teacher Education, 116 Erickson Hall, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan 48824-1034.

Director:	Mary M. Kennedy
Associate Directors:	Robert E. Floden G. Williamson McDiarmid
Editor:	Sandra Gross

Many papers published by the NCRTE are based on the Teacher Education and Learning to Teach Study, a single multisite longitudinal study. The researchers who have contributed to this study are listed below:

Marianne Amarel
Deborah Loewenberg Ball
Joyce Cain
Sandra Callis
Barbara Camilleri
Anne Chang
David K. Cohen
Ada Beth Cutler
Sharon Feiman-Nemser
Mary L. Gomez
Samgeun K. Kwon
Magdalene Lampert
Perry Lanier
Glenda Lappan
Sarah McCarthey
James Mead
Susan L. Melnick
Monica Mitchell
Harold Morgan
James Mosenthal
Gary Natriello
Barbara Neufeld
Lynn Paine
Michelle Parker
Richard Prawat
Pamela Schram
Trish Stoddart
M. Teresa Tatto
Sandra Wilcox
Suzanne Wilson
Lauren Young
Kenneth M. Zeichner
Karen K. Zumwalt

Abstract

Like adolescents at a junior high dance, experienced teachers working with beginning teachers stand poised and ready to dance. In both events, particular conditions, norms, and expectations govern the interactions of participants and heavily influence what happens and how the event unfolds. Focusing on eight instances of experienced and beginning teachers' work together in junior and senior high schools in a large urban district, the author explores the work of experienced teachers with beginning teachers and perceptions and enactments experienced teachers have of their role. Mentors pass on to beginning teachers, through their discussions and through their teaching with the beginning teachers, many messages about teaching and learning in an urban context. Yet, as with the existing but often competing and conflicting rules that govern junior high dances and lead to uncertain expectations and outcomes, so too are there conflicting ideas about what mentoring is supposed to lead to. Mentors experience conflict in their work; most notable in the data are conflicts of fitting role expectations with role enactment and the difficulties of critiquing beginners' teaching practices. Two conditions of the work, the limited time available to mentors and the norms governing the work, add to the conflicts. Implications of the study are that mentors could provide a model for beginning teachers by showing how *their* struggles to overcome the dilemmas of their practices could result in worthwhile experiences in which both experienced and beginning teachers could study and learn about teaching over time.

ADOLESCENT DANCING AND THE MENTORING OF BEGINNING TEACHERS[1]

Michelle B. Parker[2]

Picture a junior high dance. Crowds of eighth- and ninth-grade adolescents pile into the gymnasium which has been decorated with crepe paper streamers. Teachers and parents acting as chaperones stand smiling at the punch bowl in the middle of the room. As the night unfolds they mingle with the students, pushing them to talk with each other as well as persons of the opposite gender. For the most part, boys stand on one side of the room, girls on the other. The music plays, the disc jockey talks, and most of the boys and girls stand on their respective sides.

Similar to the would-be dancing of junior high adolescents, experienced teachers working with beginning teachers stand poised and ready to dance. Like the crepe paper decorations in the gym, the external conditions supportive to doing the work of mentoring have been put in place. Like the chaperones at the dance lending support to the interaction of boys and girls, mentor trainers give guidance to the interaction of mentors with beginning teachers. And like the boys and girls standing on either side uncertain about how to make that move across the floor and invite a person to dance, the mentor faces similar concerns and anxieties about inviting a beginning teacher to have a talk about teaching.

The experienced and beginning teacher pairs whom I discuss in this paper work in junior and senior high schools in a large urban district. Like the adolescents who go to the dance, the experienced teachers who participate in mentoring have certain purposes and expected outcomes. In this paper I explore the work of mentoring and perceptions and enactment of the role. The questions shaping the exploration include, What do mentors do when they work with beginners? What perceptions of the role do mentors have? What purposes do mentors see in their work, and what are the sources? How does the work mentors do with beginning teachers fit with the expectations they have?

Who Are the Dancers?

Chosen for their expertise in teaching their own junior and senior high students, the experienced teachers I discuss in this paper work with beginning teachers who are participants in a two-year alternate route training program leading to teacher certification. The mentor/beginning teacher pairs are drawn from a larger longitudinal study of teacher education and learning to teach conducted by the National Center for Research on Teacher

---

[1]Paper presented at the April 1990 annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Boston.

[2]Michelle B. Parker is a research assistant in the National Center for Research on Teacher Education and a doctoral candidate in teacher education at Michigan State University. For helpful comments on drafts and discussion of ideas the author thanks Mary Kennedy, Sarah McCarthey, Sandra Callis Bethell, and Tom Bird.

Education, located at Michigan State University. The NCRTE agenda is to study 11 teacher education programs across the United States and question how people learn to teach math and writing to diverse learners. Specifically, the NCRTE studied the alternate route training and certification program, operated by the school district, which is aimed at providing on-the-job training for persons entering teaching straight out of a bachelor's degree program or coming to teaching from an alternate career.

An integral component of the alternate route program is the work of the mentor, who provides the on-the-job training. The mentor program, created in the 1980s under a state mandate, provides funds for full-time expert teachers to support and assist beginners in their school (and at times in nearby schools). Mentor teachers spend at least 60 percent of their time as classroom teachers and typically work with one to four novices.

Study Participants

The mentor and beginning teacher pairs, along with the grade-level and subject matter the beginner teaches, are listed below. (All names are pseudonyms.)

Mentor	Beginning Teacher	Subject Beginner Teaches
Terri	Dave	mathematics
Cynthia	Steve	mathematics
Collette	Chris	mathematics
Craig	Brian	mathematics
Candace	Kevin	English ("remedial")
Dolly	Caroline	English
Lila	Clark	English
Rita	Chad	English ("remedial")

All the mentors have over 15 years teaching experience, with at least three years of mentoring experience. Most mentors teach the same subject matter (mathematics or English) as the novices with whom they work. Though Cynthia teaches science, she believes the math minor she has from college enables her to work with Steve. All but one mentor,

Lila, work in the same school as their protégé. Lila works in a junior high about two miles from Clark's school.

Learning About the Chaperones

In order to get some sense of mentors' perceptions and enactment of their roles, researchers from the NCRTE spent one day watching and talking with the mentors as they did the work. Along with the mentors, we observed the beginning teachers teach. Often we talked with the mentors after the observation, asking what they thought about the class, what they planned to discuss with the novice, what they thought the novice might say. In every case I discuss in this paper, the mentor and beginner had a conference after the lesson in which they talked about what happened. Afterwards, the researcher interviewed the mentor probing the reasons behind their statements, questions, and actions; exploring their views about what their beginning teachers need to learn; and investigating their ideas about the role and work of mentoring.

Looking across these interviews and conferences, I wondered what similarities and differences they shared in terms of the substance of the conversations and the forms of interaction. What did mentors and beginners talk about? In what ways and to what extent did they talk about the central aspects of teaching—the students and their learning of the content? I studied the forms the talk took. Who talked? Who orchestrated the discussions? On what parts of the teaching they observed and the talking they did with beginners did mentors focus? From looking at the conferences and the debriefing interviews, I could describe the kinds of support mentors in my sample offered. The kinds of support given were similar to some kinds found in other studies of experienced teachers working with colleagues (e.g., Bussis, Chittenden, and Amarel, 1976; Little, Galagaran, and O'Neal; 1984; Manolakes, 1975).

After closely examining the support mentors in my study offered and comparing the kinds of support offered with other researchers' findings, I puzzled about why the character and quality of mentoring looks as it does in this setting. Looking closely at mentors' perceptions and enactment of their roles helped me understand the tensions and difficulties of fitting role expectations with actual work setting and conditions. I found myself likening what was happening to a dance where people had some idea of what was supposed to happen but had difficulty making it happen. Nowhere is that as obvious as at an adolescent dance, where ideas about purposes, role definitions, and role enactment push and pull on each other.

In this paper I discuss the issues and dilemmas of mentoring beginning teachers in an urban school district where the mentors are pushed and pulled by purposes shaped by the conditions of the schools, views of the program in which mentors are trained, and an

alternate route certification program in which the beginners enter teaching with little formal preparation.[3]

Preparing for the Dance: Mentor Training[4]

Like the adolescents who ready themselves for the big dance, the mentors come to their role with expectations and preconceived ideas. The preconceptions may be shaped by ideas and experiences they have in training.

The 30-hour training course all mentors take is an effort to introduce mentors to their new role and provide skills and strategies they need to do the work. The training seeks to connect views about teaching and learning to teach with procedures and expectations mentors are expected to use. Created by the district's professional development staff from their experiences working with experienced and novice teachers, the training is infused with assumptions that research findings provide valid and practical knowledge about teaching in addition to the accumulated wisdom of teachers' experiences. Mentors learn that research has identified characteristics of good teaching which can be passed along to novices. With tools, (e.g., ways to establish a relationship with a beginning teachers, ways to record a lesson when observing, or ways to start and end a conference about an observed lesson), experienced teachers can pass along the accumulated wisdom of research findings and teachers' practices which can help novices learn about good practice more quickly and easily than if they were left on their own.

The training emphasizes that the work of mentoring differs from regular classroom teaching and so requires new and different skills. Mentors need preparation in the ways to help beginning teachers frame and handle the typical problems and needs they have: "classroom management, basic lesson design and delivery, and evaluating student progress" (Little and Nelson, 1990, p. 2). Mentors need to take a view of their work as more than passing on a "bag of tricks" and so need to be able to "describe and demonstrate underlying principles of teaching and learning." Using the "accumulated wisdom of experienced teachers" mentors can "make teaching (and learning) less private and more public" (p. 3). Mentors also must learn ways to work effectively on a one-on-one basis with teachers. They

---

[3]Beginning teachers participate in a three-week all-day training session before starting to teach. The program continues for two years, and has novices coming once a week for seminars. Seminar topics revolve around generic issues of teaching, for example, management, different student learning styles, alternate student organizations (e.g., cooperative learning), and different instructional presentation strategies. In addition, beginners participate in a one-week multicultural workshop between their first and second year of teaching.

[4]Information about the training comes from three main sources: the *Leader's Guide*, a Far West Laboratory publication, edited by J. W. Little and L. Nelson with contributions from school district and Far West Laboratory staff, meant for distribution to other districts contemplating a mentor training program; comments mentors made in interviews; and one interview conducted with three district professional development staff members.

need to learn ways "to talk clearly and straightforwardly about teaching without offending or otherwise harming the teacher" (p. 4).

Elements of the training correspond with the six sections in Little and Nelson's (1990) *Leader's Guide*: Orientation to the Mentor Role; Assisting the Beginning Teacher; Classroom Organization and Management for New Teachers; Classroom Consultation, Observation, and Coaching; Mentor as Staff Developer; Cooperation between the Administrator and Mentor. Each section is broken down into more specific training segments, which includes outlines of activities to do during training. Mentors also practice things they learn (e.g., conducting a clinical supervision conference) with colleagues at their schools. The first four sections of the training are directly relevant to the kinds of mentor work I discuss in this paper.

In "Orientation to the Role," mentors are welcomed to their new role and are assured that they are taking on a very important task. They hear about procedures and district guidelines to which they must adhere. Testimonials from veteran mentors provide descriptions of the work they might be doing. Three one- to two-hour workshops are devoted to discussing the leadership role mentors take on as part of their work, strategies for organizing a schedule to allow for classroom teaching as well as mentoring responsibilities, and a workshop in which characteristics of good teaching are examined and ways to help new teachers learn elements of good teaching are suggested. The review is cursory, in that the training design "assumes that mentors bring with them a grasp of recent research on effective classroom teaching" (p. 3).

In "Assisting the Beginning Teacher," mentors learn about typical problems beginning teachers face, helping them handle a range of problems (e.g., developing a resource file of materials useful to beginners; preparing one or more "orientation meetings" at which new teachers can learn procedures such as filling out grade reports), and developing relationships with novices. In "Classroom Organization and Management," mentors are introduced to different classroom management and organization techniques.

"The Classroom Consultation, Observation, and Coaching" section of the training is based on the view that, since teaching and learning takes place in classrooms, teachers need to see each other working in the classroom with students in order to be helpful to each other. As such, this section of the training seeks to help mentors learn about ways to look at and talk about classroom teaching. Mentors review skills of observation and conferencing (including pre-and postlesson conferences), coaching, and "scripting" (taking anecdotal notes as the lesson unfolds). Mentors learn about these skills, practice in small groups with mentor colleagues, and do observations of a teacher in their school. Pointing to the importance of these skills for mentors, the *Leader's Guide* states the following:

> Asking mentors to observe and be observed, we are asking them to do something that is at one and the same time *important* and *difficult*. Getting close to the classroom also means getting "close to the bone"—talking to people in detail about their ideas and their performance. (Little and Nelson, p. 196)

Dance Chaperones

At a junior high dance, parents and teachers stand on the sidelines ready to enter when needed. At times they need to lend a helping hand or helping word: "You can approach him and talk" or "Sure you can dance; just try." Chaperones may have a different idea of what they are supposed to do as well as a different way of doing it (and figuring out what the "it" is).

Likewise, mentors have to figure out what their role is supposed to be and how they can enact it. The eight mentors I studied hold some common views about the role which they talked about in the interviews. They all see themselves as experienced teachers who have strategies and advice to pass along to the beginner. They all believe in the importance of praising the beginning teacher for things they see in the classroom which they feel are good. Most of them mention the importance of listening and sympathizing with the difficulties the novice teacher encounters. The mentors differ, however, in what strategies they pass along and the purposes for doing so. To a lesser degree they differ in the reasons for praising beginners, too.

Mentors believe their years of experience in teaching allow them to show all the dance steps to the newcomers into teaching. Mentors find warrant for their help coming from their years of experience. Mentors see themselves as aged parents passing on their wisdom. Collette epitomizes mentors' views when she says that, since she has taught all the beginning math courses assigned to novice teachers, she can pass along "many, many activities and many ways of doing things. I've tried just about everything they can teach."

Many mentors channel their experiences into creating strategies, techniques, or procedures which they pass on to novices. Often the strategies are aimed at management problems and are usable in a multitude of situations. To her protégé, Chad, Rita passes on the "sponge activities" she uses to soak up time at the end of the period when the lesson has finished and the bell has not rung. Cynthia passes on strategies for getting students to do homework and bring books to class.

In addition to management strategies, some mentors pass on *instructional* strategies. Lila talks with Clark about ways to include reading in every class period (have students read novels when they first come into class). Craig suggests to Brian ways to get students involved and doing the math (change the ways Brian and his aide help students individually—make them do the problems; teach material not in their text so they have to take notes and then give quizzes and let them use their notes).

One mentor, Dolly, has a holistic view of what she should be passing on. She believes mentors "pass on the torch. Mentors are chosen because they are successful. Everybody wants to be successful, I believe. Anybody that I can help to be successful is one more good person coming along as I leave." Dolly sees herself passing on to Caroline the torch of teaching. She has been successful and by passing on what made her effective she can know that what she considers to be a good teacher will replace her. She wants to help novices be successful and realize their success.

All of the mentors stress the importance of pointing out good things to the novices. Dolly, for example, spends a lot of time convincing Caroline that she is a good teacher. Dolly believes that Caroline is a "little more sure of herself than she was in the beginning. Which I think is part of what I was trying to accomplish—to make her see what she was doing was indeed that good." Mentors believe they should emphasize novices' good points for many reasons. Some say that all novices need to feel good about what they do (Candace, Collette, Lila, Rita, Terri). Others believe that novices need to see that they are doing the best they can given the difficult contexts in which they work (Collette, Craig, Cynthia, Dolly). Some mentors compare and contrast what novices do with what more experienced teachers do (Collette, Dolly), assuring novices that what they do and the limitations they experience are similar to the difficulties faced by veteran teachers.

In addition to praise and stroking, many mentors mention spending time simply listening to beginners. Collette remembers having a new teacher break down and cry on her shoulder for two hours after school one day. Lila recounts that she and Clark can talk for "hours and hours—about all kinds of things. They just need someone to talk to." Terri mentions that sometimes a listener is the thing beginners need most.

While the content of what mentors pass along to newcomers may be different, they still all see themselves as providers of *something*. By virtue of their many years of teaching, mentors believe they are wiser about teaching than the beginners with whom they work. Like chaperones at an adolescent dance, the mentors watch the young people. As they watch they intervene in ways shaped by their desires to undo or at least recast the wrongs of their younger years. One mentor, Craig, has a model from which to shape his work. He remembers his entry into teaching and that he didn't know what to expect or do. He felt lost. So he found a teacher with whom he could sit during lunch, nutrition break, or after school. Craig would ask,

> "When you're teaching this concept, how do you teach it?" or "These kids say this to me. What is this supposed to mean? How do I react to kids that are doing this stuff?" and then as the teacher talked with me, he talked to me not trying to clone me, but to show me how to deal with people. . . . I could confide in him. I didn't feel threatened by him. I could expose my frustrations

to him and he could expose his own to me to show me that "Hey, you are not the only one."

Craig is the only mentor who mentions having a model from which to shape his own mentor work. Other mentors rely on what they have learned from their experiences and what they know which they can actually pass along. They have developed helpful strategies which are time-worn and proven; they can pass them along. Based on memories of their own professional development, their mentor training, and their mentor work, mentors seem to have convinced themselves that beginning teachers need strategies to handle problems of a managerial and instructional kind that may arise. In addition, mentors can praise novices for hanging in and doing *something*. The mentors believe that something can always be praised, and that applauding something each time they talk with novices is important. Finally, they can listen with sympathetic ears to the joy as well as the pain which novice teachers often find in their work.

Can We Dance? or Are We Here to Dance?

Norms of both an explicit and implicit type govern junior high dances. Boys and girls stand on different sides of the gym. Boys usually ask girls to dance (though many of us hold out hope that that is changing). After a boy and girl get together, the conversation usually has some predictable parts. The official meeting: What's your name? Where do you live? Where do you go to school? What classes do you have? And possibly the two persons get past the superficial talk and can get down to talking about things which allow them to get to know each other. The conversation becomes one in which both persons are making statements and speculations and sharing opinions.

But whether and how the talk ever gets past the superficial level depends on many factors. Can the boy or girl pass the imaginary wall which divides the room and the genders? Can they develop the trust and honesty which many consider capstones to meaningful talk? How often have they attended a dance or other social occasion? What have they learned and not learned about ways to act? Finally, though the questions and issues I mention usually do arise, they are not always certain to occur for all adolescents attending all junior high dances all over the United States. The uncertainty of just what will happen and its consequences vary in terms of context and norms which govern actions, personal tastes and personalities, and external regulations from the school and community.

As with the existing but often competing and conflicting rules that govern junior high dances and lead to uncertain expectations and outcomes, so too are there conflicting ideas about what mentoring is supposed to lead to. The interviews are scattered with mentors' talk about what they think they are supposed to do and what they perceive they do. Often

the sources of the perceptions and expectations—mentors' idiosyncratic views and views mentors learn during training—do not match.

Difficulties With Work

Conflicts of role. Mentors experience conflicts in their work, including fitting role expectations with role enactment and the difficulties of critiquing beginners' practices. Often mentors speak about the tensions they must work through in connecting what they learn about mentoring and what they can actually do as a mentor. Notice, for example, the conflicting interpretations of a mentor's work in Terri's comments to the researcher. She explains to the researcher what she tells her protégés about the role of mentoring.

> [They know the mentor is supposed] to just be there when you need her for whatever. They know that and I establish that with them at the very beginning, that I'm here to help you in any capacity but what I do is make suggestions. And I tell them if you don't follow them it's alright. Maybe what I suggest is something that you feel you can't use.

In training Terri learned that mentors should help beginning teachers with "whatever" they need. She heard about typical needs and problems beginners have and how to be sensitive to those areas. She also learned that beginners may have a wide variety of needs and so her work may involve many different things. The fact that individuals may differ in their needs is understandable, but that they may need "whatever" is a vague and unclear message about what she should do with beginners. Mentors have to do something, but what remains vague.

While she knows she is *expected* to be there for "whatever," she seems to see her primary role as maker of suggestions. Her laissez-faire attitude of letting beginners take or leave what she has to offer implies an assumption that teachers have some sense or "feeling" about what will or will not work for them. They have that sense and can act on it themselves. Assuming beginners can make choices among the suggestions she makes may also be a way for Terri to reconcile what she heard during the training (assist in a variety of ways), the uncertainty of what she should be available to give, and what she can actually do (make suggestions).

Another mentor, Cynthia, has also found ways to reconcile what she can actually do as a mentor with what she offers her protégés. She believes that her prime responsibility is to be an enabler for the beginner. She wants to find out what he planned for a lesson and why. Then

> I want to know how I can give him some strategies to help him do that. . . . And then when I go back I want to see that in action. Maybe it won't

> be an algebra class when I go back. You know how our schedules are. . . . But strategies will be the same [for all classes] and it has to become a part of that person.

Cynthia provides strategies by watching what the beginner needs and then making suggestions about ways to handle a situation, problem, or need. For example, in the conference I observed she suggested some strategies to her novice. She and Steve talked about two problems: getting students to do homework and getting them to bring their textbooks to class. Cynthia made suggestions about getting homework done (calling parents, making homework part of the class grade) and getting students to bring texts to class (having open book tests, record who brings their books and who does not, and call parents). Cynthia planned to check in the next week to see if Steve was using the strategies and what kinds of success he was achieving.

Cynthia seems to have managed her dilemma of not being able to observe the success of her suggestions in the class she already observed by providing Steve with strategies which she believes will work across situations, students, and course topics. She believes she has some worthwhile strategies to pass on to protégés and that passing them on is part of her role. Yet since she cannot observe Steve teaching all his classes everyday because of schedule conflicts (responsibilities for her own students), she provides Steve with tactics which can be used in many different situations.

Both Cynthia and Terri have found ways to reconcile what they think they should be doing, what the training indicates they should be doing, what they are trained to do, and what they can actually do. But in what ways and to what extent have they considered the educational worth of the activities to teacher and student? Have they helped their protégés make decisions about when and how to use strategies? Experienced teachers make decisions about using different activities based on particular criteria reasons. Have they helped beginning teachers understand and realize the reasons?

Conflict about critiquing "personal style." In addition to wrestling with role conflicts, mentors face dilemmas which arise when they see something in beginning teachers' classrooms which does not fit with their own ways of practicing. When I looked at the conferences mentors had with their protégés and the statements they made about the conferences during debriefing sessions with researchers, I found that some mentors avoided dealing with conflicting views about practice while others handled it in distinct ways: Specifically, Dolly and Collette saw no conflict, assuming the beginners knew the subjects they were teaching, were teaching it according to what the curriculum suggested, and, therefore, were doing a fine job. Terri and Cynthia simply didn't address whether or not they agreed with the practices they saw. Candace asked Kevin a lot of questions about what

he did with little critique from her while Lila and Rita told their protégés what to do. Finally, Craig questioned, discussed, and made statements about what he saw.

Dolly, one of the mentors who saw no conflict between her views of good practice and what she observed in their protégés' classrooms, pointed to two major curricular inclusions Caroline made—using reading, writing, and speaking in one class and using different learning modes—visual and auditory—and said that, since good English teachers use these instructional methods and curriculum, Caroline was doing a good job. Knowing that Chris majored in math and had been accepted to graduate school, Collette, another mentor who saw no conflict, assumed he knew his mathematics and was learning "how to get this information over to students." Since beginners have no way to judge how things worked in class, she tells the researcher, she compares and contrasts what they are doing with other teachers in the school. She concludes that his practices are in line with others.[5] Dolly and Collette assumed their beginners knew the content they were teaching since it fit with the prescribed curriculum.

During the conferences, Terri and Cynthia didn't address whether they agreed with beginners' practices; they simply provided strategies as kinds of stopgaps for problems they saw beginners encounter. Even when talking with the researcher after the conference, they raised no concerns. Candace also did not address whether she agreed with Kevin's practices during the conference. She asked lots of questions: Have you ever done prewriting with students? What will you do with the study guide questions students complete? How do you plan to teach vocabulary? Only in the debriefing with the researcher does she mention that some things she observed in Kevin's lesson she questioned (he allowed too much time for a writing assignment he made, she wanted to see more student-teacher interaction, and she thought students needed more independent work rather than all the teacher directed lessons they got). These three mentors did not openly state disagreement or concern to their protégés about their practices.

Lila and Rita told their beginners things to do. Lila told Clark to have students do more independent reading, to have them writing, to be careful about a question he planned to ask about a story the class had read. In the debriefing she tells how she disagrees with his use of movies so much. Also, she wants him to use the stories and assignments she has created and shared with Clark. Similarly, Rita told Chad to stop student reading earlier in the period and allow time for writing. She also told him about certain kinds of activities to use at the end of the period when time is left.

Craig was the only mentor who raised questions he had, discussing Brian's practices and rationale during the conference. When Brian said he was frustrated, Craig probed why.

---

[5]In fact, Collette recommended to the department chair that Chris teach upper level math classes his second semester in the school. Most beginning teachers teach classes in basic math and algebra 1. Chris lost all his basic classes and took on algebra 2, geometry, and algebra 1.

And when Brian said he wondered what students were learning and why they didn't seem motivated, Craig gently prodded him to look back over the lesson and think about what he had done. Craig helped Brian realize that he didn't allow students enough time to think through answers. Brian and Craig talked about ways to get students engaged in the learning and doing of mathematics. At the end, they agreed to talk more about arranging cooperative learning opportunities for students.

Though the mentors deal differently with conflicts in views about protégés' practices, for the most part they seem to avoid direct critique (some did critique their practices but revealed the critiques only to the researcher). Candace explains,

> [Kevin] has his own personality, . . . his own attitude. . . . I'm much more strict and I don't want to say that I think all teachers should have my style because that's one thing I try to respect is that you have hundreds of different styles.

Candace seems to have decided that Kevin's "style" is set and should and/or cannot be questioned or critiqued. Lila agrees. When the researcher asks whose ideas about teaching she is presenting in her work with novice teachers, she continues,

> No matter what we do, we do things our own way. And one thing about teaching is that it's an independent kind of job. Nobody is looking over my shoulder every day. . . . It gives you great latitude. And I do a lot of experimenting. And if I think something works, then I will continue to use it; and if I think it is really good, then I encourage my mentee to use it.

Both Lila and Candace seem to represent the majority view among the mentors I examined, believing that individual teachers have individual "styles." Novices will put into practice their individual preferences, just like experienced teachers have. Individuals have preferences, and mentors may feel they should not question practices because they reflect personal style. Nor should they hold up beginning teachers' practices to close scrutiny.

The warrant of personal preference does not fit with the ideas presented in training. In the *Leader's Guide* (Little and Nelson, 1990), many references are made to finding warrants for mentors' actions and suggestions in a body of research and in the accumulated experiences of teachers:

> Mentors are able to assemble practical examples of problems and solutions from the experience of many teachers (p. 2). . . . This session [in the section Orientation to the New Role] assumes that good teaching is more than a matter of personal style. That is, some elements of effective teaching can be identified, described in detail, and discussed among teachers. (p. 13)

Since holding personal preference up as a rationale for practicing a certain way does not fit with ideas undergirding the training, and once Brian does actually critique Craig's practice, an alternative explanation may be that for the most part mentors are not comfortable discussing and critiquing practice. Mentors often say during the interviews that they are not engaged in evaluating the beginners' work. They emphasize that they never discuss with the administration or other teachers what goes on in a particular novice's classroom (and they need lots of assurance that what they say to researchers is confidential). Mentors may believe that critiquing practice is the same as evaluating, doing something they are not supposed to do. Also, even though during training they get some practice talking with other teachers about practice (they must observe and carry out clinical supervision conferences with a teacher in their school and review it in training), mentors may need more time and practice critiquing and discussing practice than they get. For most teachers, observing and talking with colleagues about practice is not done.

Conditions of Work

Like the adolescents who have to cross the imaginary line in the middle of the gymnasium in order to dance, the mentors have to find ways to observe and talk about practice in order to be mentors. Two conditions of the work, the limited time available to mentors and the norms governing the workplace, make mentors' jobs difficult.

Time. One condition necessary for talking and demonstrating and describing is time. All the mentors make some mention of the difficulties of making and finding time to work with their protégés. Some of the mentors plan not to continue in the job because of the time pressures.[6] Lila, Terri, and Collette thought that time would be allotted for their duties. When she signed up to be a mentor, Collette explains, she expected to have more time

> to actually observe [beginning teachers] a little bit more and I would be available to help them when they needed help. But they [the persons directing the Mentor Program] don't want us to get away from the classroom situation so that we don't lose our ideas teaching kids. Therefore I only have a limited amount of time which means I don't see and observe Chris as often as I would like. . . . I thought I was going to have time to help anyone who needs it and I don't have that much time. I will observe the teachers that I feel need my help more.

Collette mirrors what other mentors said about their expectations of having time available to help all those who need it. Collette knows that part of the state policy that

[6]When revealing to me they did not plan to continue, the four mentors either whispered or asked that I turn off the tape recorder.

established the mentor program states that mentors are to keep at least 60 percent of their classroom responsibilities to remain knowledgeable and credible about classroom life. However, balancing time between classroom and mentor responsibilities is very difficult. Even when she makes the time for mentoring, she must decide which protégé she will work with. When push comes to shove, she seems to be saying, the beginning teachers having the most need will get her attention.

Like the adolescents who know they are going to a dance and so they expect to dance, so too the mentors have some expectations of what they will be doing. In training they hear their role defined as one in which they will be able to attend to beginning teachers' needs. In order to do so, mentors realize they need time to be with the beginner. Yet where can a mentor find the time? And, who should get the time—the beginning teacher or the junior or senior students for whom the mentor is also responsible? The decisions mentors must make carry with them practical, moral, and ethical implications. Whether the mentor spends time with students or the beginning teacher, extra time and effort must be made.

Norms of privacy. Many scholars have pointed to the salient norms of privacy in schools which keep individuals' practices tucked away from scrutiny (Bird, 1986; Feiman-Nemser and Floden, 1986; Little, 1982; Little et al., 1984). Carrying out a role which has at its core working with teachers in classrooms under conditions where the norms insulate them against public scrutiny can be next to impossible. The mentors I studied have some common ways of overcoming and managing the difficulties of working in situations governed by norms of privacy. For the most part they limit the degree to which they focus on protégés' practices, attending to some things a lot and examining others less closely.

One way to take direct attention away from the teacher's practices is to focus on students, a worthy investment of time since learning about students is a central aspect of teaching and so integral to any talk about it. Craig in fact believes that part of his mentoring role is to watch out for students through helping a beginning teacher. Through helping the novice he helps students, "because every teacher will experiment with things and that may be in the wrong direction if it's a lost kid. And it's hard for us to retrieve those kids after they've left the system."

Craig wants to alter a novice's expectations, actions, effects, and consequences which might be injurious to students before students become disengaged from school and learning. Craig sees himself as someone who, along with Brian, can try to uncover students' understandings of mathematics. He suggested to Brian that he "create a situation where a kid must understand in order to answer." He wanted to push Brian to think more than he had about individual students' understanding. He also suggested that Brian make students dependent on themselves instead of the teacher and aide for figuring out problems. With suggestions he made, Craig wanted Brian "to build a pool of information and choose from alternatives" when teaching his students.

In what ways and for what reasons mentors focus on students varies. Collette sees herself as an observer of students' behaviors and student/teacher interaction. In the lesson we both observed, she pointed out to Chris that he called on the same students all the time. When asked how she thought she helped Chris, she answers,

> Now he understands that he has to involve all of his class. And he is looking for those that are not participating and trying to draw them in in some manner. And if I see him doing that, I point that out.

Other mentors asked their protégés questions about students during the conference. Candace asked Kevin if he had students read stories aloud or silently. Rita made suggestions about students: "They'll do much better writing if you really take a little time to talk about [the story they read today] before they write about it on Monday."

While mentors give attention to students, the degree and kind is limited. With the exception of Craig no one makes direct links between what the teacher did and what students learned, what students had opportunity to learn, what might be important for students to learn, and how they might learn it. In so doing, mentors would have to take a stand and be critical of the practices they saw. They would have to step over the domains of privacy and make what happened in the classroom public and open for challenge.

In training mentors learn ways to make the traditionally private more public. As part of their training in the clinical supervision model, they learn to make anecdotal records of what happens in class, including behaviors, interactions, questions asked, and so on, all written in a dispassionate, "tell it as you see it" manner. According to the early clinical supervision advocates, making and using records of this sort allows supervision to be more objective since it is behaviorally based (Goldhammer, 1969). Many of the mentors "script" lessons and focus the conference on discussion of the script, which serves as a reminder of all that happened in a lesson.

While having the script is certainly handy (as Craig says it allows Brian to "see" the lesson all over again), the script may become a misused and misdirected tool when reviewing a whole lesson. Talking about everything in a lesson may make it impossible to have any kind of deep discussion on a particular issue; having a deep discussion makes it difficult to get through the script. Rita and Candace focused the conference around the scripts, for example. Collette, Craig, and Lila abandoned their scripts. Collette didn't feel she needed to review everything; she concluded everything went well so a cursory review was all that was necessary. Craig felt that the need to discuss Brian's frustrations superseded immediate and complete attention to the script, and Lila mentioned points on the script but not in a chronological manner. The other mentors either did not script (Dolly) nor did they take any notes (Terri and Cynthia).

The varying focus mentors put on discussing the script relates to the varying ways in which they challenge the privacy of practice. Adhering rigidly to the script leaves little time to discuss in any great detail a particular aspect of practice. The mentors who did not use a script or some other form of recording the lesson also did not challenge what they saw or present their ideas and critique of it. They seem to assume that since they deemed what they observed as good, they did not need to discuss it. When Lila and Craig did not adhere to a script, they could concentrate on particular parts of what they saw. Those mentors seem to challenge the assumption that practice is subject to only private investigation.

Given the privacy of teaching which characterizes many schools, that some mentors do things that make teaching less private is somewhat astonishing. Focusing observations and discussion during conferences on students and "scripting" lessons are two such ways. Yet when scripting and attention to students is only superficially given, that is, for the most part only behaviors are noted and discussed, as some mentors' practices show, essential aspects of a person's teaching still remain cloaked. Little *study* of why actions happened, what might be the consequences, and how changing what happened might be advisable takes place. Adherence to norms of privacy permit warrants for practice based on personal "style" to continue unquestioned. Contemplating and discussing the moral dimensions of teaching can be sidetracked for fear of offending a colleague. The consequences of that avoidance by mentors can be the continuation of beginners' practices which deny opportunities for students' meaningful learning.

Discussion: Can We Make It to the Dance?

My investigation of the mentors working with beginning teachers in one alternate route teaching program clearly shows that mentors face tensions and conflicts in their work. Working in situations marked by salient norms of privacy, they must manage conflicts associated with time, role, and job responsibilities in order to carry out the obligations of their role—to offer support and assistance to beginning teachers. Mentors manage to fit together in some workable configuration personal role definitions, ideas heard in training, and the realities of the workplace.

The mentors I examined in my study deal with teaching and learning situations which vary in terms of subject matter, contexts, students, attitudes and beliefs of teachers. What they talk about with beginners can range from discussing questions asked during a reading lesson (Rita, Lila) to considering how much material to cover in one period (Terri, Collette, Craig) to considering the management and organization of class discussion about a certain topic or theme (Lila, Craig) to arranging future focuses for work (Craig, Cynthia). The ways in which mentors go about guiding the discussions with beginners also vary. Some ask a lot of questions, providing little feedback from their own experiences, while others tell beginners what to do based on what they have done.

In trying to account for the work and role orientation which emerged from my analyses I thought about possible sources. My analyses of the work suggest that mentors seem to depend a lot on their own practices. At times, the strategies and suggestions mentors offer may help the beginner bring order to her class, or check a student's progress, or encourage students to do homework. At times the suggestions they make may come from tried and tested ideas about curriculum (e.g., when Rita and Lila talk about having reading, writing, and speaking in each lesson) or tested strategies from research (e.g., when Craig, Terri, and Lila mention cooperative learning strategies).

But at times either no model of current practice exists to which the mentor can turn or the model does not fit with the particulars of the situation the beginning teacher faces. That such a situation exists is not surprising; the nature of the professional work of teaching requires deliberative action based on reasoned judgment in complex and often ambiguous situations (Jackson, 1968; Kennedy, 1987; Little, 1988; Zumwalt, 1982). Both mentors and beginning teachers must be prepared to face those situations. The models of teaching which mentors suggest cannot work across all students, teachers, subject matter, and contexts. Even suggesting possible strategies might limit the potential for introducing and experimenting with new ways to teach and foster meaningful student learning.

Not only are models of teaching practice problematic to use, so too are models of mentoring. In fact no clear precedent exists for the mentor role in a school or district (cf. Bird, 1986). To what can mentoring be compared? Is it like university supervision of student teachers? Is it like on-the-job *training*? Is it like the support and assistance given to beginning teachers in an induction program? The role and work of a mentor in an alternate route is one which seems unique (see Feiman-Nemser, Parker, and Zeichner, 1990).

The absence of a model of mentoring as well as a model of teaching adds to the uncertainty of enacting the role of mentor. Mentors are forced to form precedents, looking to their own teaching practices for guiding their work with beginners. The training all mentors go through provides some processes and strategies for fulfilling certain responsibilities (e.g., scripting lessons, certain "opening questions" mentors can use when meeting their protégé). While offering procedural knowledge about mentors' work, however, the training does not orient mentors to an understanding of what it means to provide support and assistance to particular beginning teachers in particular teaching situations. Given the short duration of the training (30 hours) and its orientation, mentors are exposed to only minimal discussion about teaching and learning to teach. They get only a small amount of *guided practice* when learning new strategies, too. What mentors learn, how they learn it, and the views and orientations discussed (and left out) in training may not be enough to provide the competence and confidence to manage the uncertainty of their practice.

Unlike the adolescents at the junior high dance, who have some models and ways to learn steps (television, movies, friends), the mentors' models are limited and/or nonexistent. By having some models for dancing, adolescents can bring some certainty to the occasion. They can then concentrate on other aspects, for example, the social interaction or buying clothes. The models of teaching practice used by mentors are not as all-encompassing and reliance on them blurs seeing new possibilities for framing and managing dilemmas. Absence of models for the mentoring role blurs the potential for definition and greater understanding of the role.

Implications

My analyses lead me to suggest that mentors be educated and helped to set up occasions whereby they and the protégés with whom they work look at their own practices as well as colleagues' work in a careful and thoughtful manner. They could make informed judgments by referring to standards and principles for professional practice as well as their by questioning and justifying their own actions. Mentors could begin talking and learning from practice.

Mentors could provide the model by showing how *their* struggles to overcome the dilemmas of their practices (altering the norms of privacy and critiquing colleagues' work) could result in worthwhile experiences in which they study and learn about teaching over time. Writing about experience in education, Dewey (1938) says that worthwhile experiences are those which "live fruitfully and creatively in subsequent experiences" (p. 28). Mentors can arrange those kinds of experiences for themselves and their protégés.

The challenge facing the teacher education community is to work with schools and staff to alter conditions which make it very difficult for mentors to carry out their responsibilities. In addition, teacher educators must ask themselves how people learn to teach teachers and how they enact their new roles. They must design and set up educative experiences for the mentors who in turn can set up those kinds of learning experiences for themselves and the beginners with whom they work. As Dewey (1938) warns: "Any experience is mis-educative that has the effect of arresting or distorting the growth of further experience" (p. 25). Mentors as well as the persons who do the training for the mentoring role must think hard about setting up experiences which lead to rich experiences for mentors, the beginning teachers with whom they work, and ultimately the students they teach.

References

Bird, T. (1986). *The mentors' dilemma.* San Francisco: Far West Laboratory.

Bussis, A. M., Chittenden, E. A., and Amarel, M. (1976). *Beyond surface curriculum: An interview study of teachers' understandings.* Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education.* New York: Collier/Macmillan.

Feiman-Nemser, S., and Floden, R. (1986). The cultures of teaching. In M. C. Wittrock (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teaching* (3rd ed., pp. 505-526). New York: Macmillan.

Feiman-Nemser, S., Parker, M. B., and Zeichner, K. (1990, April). *When is mentoring teacher education?* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Boston.

Goldhammer, R. (1969). *Clinical supervision: Special methods for the supervision of teachers.* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Jackson, P. (1968). *Life in classrooms.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Kennedy, M. (1987). *Inexact sciences: Professional education and the development of expertise* (Issue Paper 87-2). East Lansing: Michigan State University, National Center for Research on Teacher Education.

Little, J. W. (1982). Norms of collegiality and experimentation: Workplace conditions of school success. *American Educational Research Journal, 19,* 325-340.

Little, J. W. (1988). Assessing the prospects for teacher leadership. In A. Liebermann (Ed.), *Building a professional culture in schools* (pp. 78-106). New York: Teachers College Press.

Little, J. W., Galagaran, P., and O'Neal, R. (1984). *Professional development roles and relationships: Principles and skills of "advising."* San Francisco: Far West Laboratory.

Little, J. W., and Nelson, L. (Eds.). (1990). *Leader's guide to mentor training.* San Francisco: Far West Laboratory.

Manolakes, T. (1975). The advisory system and supervision. In K. Devaney (Ed.), *Essays on teachers' centers* (pp. 103-111). San Francisco: Far West Laboratory.

Zumwalt, K. (1982). Research on teaching: Policy implications for teacher education. In A. Liebermann and M. McLaughlin (Eds.), *Policy making in education* (81st yearbook of the National Society of the Study of Education). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.